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Chair: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 130: Programme planning (A/65/6, A/65/16 and A/65/70)

1. **Mr. Pavlovich** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination), introducing the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) on its fiftieth session (A/65/16), said that for the first time since its forty-second session, the Committee had reached consensus on all of the programmes submitted for its consideration, a testament to the satisfactory status of its working methods. The majority of reports had been introduced by senior Secretariat officials, thus affording the Committee access to key information on the matters before it.

2. With respect to the United Nations programme performance for the biennium 2008-2009, the Committee had emphasized the need for greater clarity in the programme performance report and recommended, inter alia, that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to improve the report by explaining the implementation rate and providing reasons for the addition, postponement and termination of outputs.

3. The Committee had also considered the plan outline of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2012-2013 (A/65/6 (Part one)). The Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the eight priorities contained in paragraph 47 of the plan outline. It also recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to fully implement its resolution 64/259 and to present measures taken to promote accountability within the Secretariat in future plan outlines and biennial programme plans of the strategic framework. Areas of concern identified by the Committee regarding the proposed strategic framework were set out in paragraph 37 of its report.

4. With respect to evaluation, CPC had considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-seventh session on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs (E/AC.51/2010/2). The Committee recommended, inter alia, that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to take measures to address the imbalance in geographic representation and gender parity in the Department of Political Affairs in general and in the electoral assistance roster in particular.

5. On the issue of coordination, the Committee had reviewed the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for 2009/10 (E/2010/69) and the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (E/AC.51/2010/3). CPC recommended that the General Assembly should bring to the attention of the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, the need for the Board to continue enhancing system-wide coordination in conformity with the intergovernmental mandates of its member organizations. All measures and initiatives, such as the "green economy initiative" and the concept of "one United Nations", should be consistent with those mandates. The Committee encouraged CEB to strengthen its cooperation with the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) through their more frequent participation in meetings of the High-level Committee on Management, the High-level Committee on Programmes and the United Nations Development Group. CPC had recalled General Assembly resolutions 62/236, 63/260 and 64/243 urging the Secretary-General to fill the vacant post of Under-Secretary-General in charge of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to report on the outcome at the first resumed part of its sixty-fifth session.

6. **Mr. Yamazaki** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013 (A/65/6), said that the strategic framework had been prepared in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/269, which requested the Secretary-General to prepare a strategic framework on a biennial basis.

7. By the same resolution, the General Assembly had affirmed that the strategic framework should constitute the principal policy directive of the United Nations. The strategic framework for 2012-2013 also took into account the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 59/275, 61/235, 63/247 and 64/229. Efforts

had been made to improve the format of part one and to reflect the longer-term objectives contained therein by, inter alia, elaborating on the priorities agreed to by Member States.

8. The strategic framework was one of the fundamental instruments guiding the work of the Organization. Part one, which contained the plan outline, highlighted longer-term objectives and priorities, while part two, the biennial programme plan, covered 27 programmes. The document was a translation of legislative mandates and would serve as the basis for the biennial programme budget proposals for 2012-2013. A summary of key legislative mandates was provided at the end of each programme in part two.

9. The plan outline had been prepared with the full involvement of the Secretary-General and the senior management of the Secretariat. The longer-term objectives reflected the guidance received from Member States, notably through CPC and the General Assembly, on the work of the Organization. The priorities identified by the General Assembly over the previous decade, together with the seven strategic opportunities articulated by the Secretary-General at the beginning of 2010, had shaped the strategic framework.

10. There was widespread agreement that the United Nations should renew its focus on sustainable development and an inclusive recovery from economic crisis. The period covered by the strategic framework also coincided with what must be a concerted push to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the agreed deadline of 2015. Climate change was another critical factor in determining work on development, as the first year covered by the strategic framework coincided with the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. In addition, the Organization's core responsibilities for the period 2012-2013 included addressing the special needs of the least developed countries, implementing the action plan agreed at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in support of disarmament and a nuclear-free world, maintaining international peace and security, and promoting human rights, justice and international law. With the adoption of the counter-terrorism strategy in 2006 and the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the Organization's work would also encompass efforts to combat international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Success in realizing the vision set out in the proposed strategic framework would depend on ensuring the effective functioning of the Organization through the implementation of the Umoja enterprise resource planning project and the International Public Sector Accounting Standards. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/259, the United Nations would continue to improve its internal control mechanisms and accountability.

11. Work would continue, as requested by General Assembly resolution 58/269, to ensure that programmes were updated to reflect the impact of intergovernmental decisions taken subsequent to the preparation of the strategic framework. Each programme would be reviewed in the context of the ongoing budget preparations for 2012-2013. Legislative mandates and programmatic adjustments that were not reflected in the strategic framework adopted by the General Assembly would be highlighted and submitted to the Fifth Committee for its review in 2011.

12. The proposed strategic framework had already undergone intergovernmental review by relevant sectoral, functional and regional bodies. In some cases, the outcomes had been incorporated in the proposals now before the Committee. In others, intergovernmental review had occurred after the finalization of initial proposals and modifications had been provided to CPC when it reviewed the proposed strategic framework.

13. The proposed strategic framework for the period 2012-2013 had benefited from the experience gained since the logical framework showing the relationship among objectives, strategy, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement had been introduced in 2002. Reporting on results achieved, as presented in the programme performance report for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/65/70), had also contributed to a better understanding of the logical framework, the management of the work programme to achieve results, and the crucial role of feedback in the cycle of planning, programme design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

14. **Mr. Baez** (Policy and Oversight Coordination Service), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/65/70), said that the report contained information on the production of outputs — the traditional measure of performance —

and provided an overall account of the results obtained by the Organization during the period 2008-2009.

15. Of the 31 sections reporting quantifiable outputs, 18 had achieved implementation rates of 90 per cent or higher, compared to 23 in the previous biennium, while 10 had implementation rates between 80 and 89 per cent, compared to 5 in the previous biennium. Only three budget sections had implementation rates lower than 80 per cent, namely, disarmament (71 per cent), safety and security (71 per cent) and the Office of Human Resources Management (69 per cent). The Organization had achieved significant results during the biennium, which were detailed by budget section in the report.

16. At its forty-eighth session, CPC had recommended that programme managers should be held accountable for the achievement of results and for documenting progress towards fulfilling the commitments made in the programme budget through the inclusion of the related management responsibilities in the performance appraisal process. As of January 2010, the terms of reference of the Management Performance Board — the highest-level committee advising the Secretary-General on performance-related issues — had been modified to ensure that it considered the senior managers' compacts and the programme performance report simultaneously. Reinforcing the links between those instruments would result in better management and a more accountable United Nations. Through the performance management reforms currently under way, the Office of Human Resources Management would ensure that such linkages were also established in the individual workplans of staff members.

17. **Mr. Al-Shahari** (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underlined the importance of CPC as the main subsidiary body of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination. The Committee was at the core of the General Assembly's capacity to provide oversight of evaluation procedures to improve programme design and avoid overlapping and duplication. The Group fully endorsed its recommendations.

18. Setting the priorities of the United Nations was the sole prerogative of the Member States. It was essential that intergovernmental bodies should discuss the draft strategic framework prior to its examination by CPC, as stipulated in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. Inconsistencies between the adopted legislative mandates and some of the proposals regarding the strategic framework had led to lengthy debates and negotiations, particularly with respect to concepts and approaches that were far from enjoying consensus among Member States or were still under discussion by intergovernmental bodies. The results contained in the report of CPC now represented a balanced reflection of legislative mandates and the Group endorsed the relevant conclusions and recommendation of CPC.

19. The Chief Executives Board should play an important role in improving coordination in the United Nations system. The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the Board, should take action to enhance its transparency and accountability to Member States. The Group encouraged CEB, ICSC and JIU to engage in more effective dialogue and cooperation on matters of common interest.

20. The steps taken by the United Nations system to support NEPAD were welcome. The establishment in Addis Ababa of the United Nations Office to the African Union should facilitate the implementation of the Organization's mandate on support for the region. It was difficult to understand the delay in filling the vacant post of Under-Secretary-General in charge of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. The Group endorsed the conclusion of CPC set out in paragraph 386 of its report (A/65/16) and expected the Secretary-General to take urgent action in that regard.

21. **Mr. De Preter** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, welcomed the implementation by CPC of measures to improve the effectiveness of its decisions, which would help in the discharge of its mandate. The assistance of the Secretariat, as well as closer dialogue between CPC and relevant bodies and services, were invaluable for the effective implementation of that Committee's work.

22. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) said that his delegation had been struck by the interpretation of regulation 4.8 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme

Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation contained in a CPC working paper (E/AC.51/2010/CRP.1), according to which the Human Rights Council was not the relevant organ to review the proposed strategic framework for programme 19, Human rights, prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). He expressed the hope that the issue would be resolved and called upon OHCHR to comply strictly with the Regulations.

23. The Secretariat had an obligation to prepare the strategic framework in strict compliance with legislative mandates. However, at the fiftieth session of CPC, some entities had promoted concepts and approaches that were still the subject of deliberations among Member States and upon which no consensus had been reached, leading to lengthy negotiations on a number of programmes.

24. With respect to coordination, he found it disturbing that CEB tended to operate quasi-autonomously, presented Member States with a fait accompli in many instances, promoted the interests of only one segment of the Organization's membership and ignored intergovernmental mandates. CPC had made specific recommendations to rectify that situation. In that context, he also drew attention to the recommendations of JIU on the selection and conditions of service of Executive Heads in the United Nations system organizations (A/65/71). He noted that the General Assembly was still awaiting the Secretary-General's remarks on an important JIU report on the role of the special representatives of the Secretary-General and resident coordinators (A/65/394).

25. The outcome of the fiftieth session of CPC reaffirmed the relevance of its conclusions and recommendations, which his delegation fully endorsed.

26. **Mr. Safaei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation endorsed the recommendations of CPC, whose detailed evaluation of all United Nations programmes helped ensure that mandates approved by Member States were implemented effectively. The guidance provided by CPC to the entities of the United Nations system helped to enhance their relevance, responsiveness and coordination. CPC also helped ensure that the Secretariat accurately translated legislative mandates into programmes. The revisions to the strategic framework proposed by CPC, being based on consensus, would facilitate the budget preparation process.

27. CEB should make every effort to strengthen the implementation of the development agenda through a system-wide approach that coordinated the actions of all agencies in combating hunger and poverty and mitigating the impact of the world economic and financial crisis. The Board must also ensure that the United Nations system played a fundamental role in the implementation of NEPAD. The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, should enhance its transparency and accountability by encouraging more frequent and substantive dialogue between the Board and Member States.

28. **Mr. Nguyen** Dinh Hai (Viet Nam) said that CPC made a vital contribution to the operation of the Organization by guiding programme design and identifying programmatic changes arising from the decisions of intergovernmental bodies. Its guidance to entities of the United Nations system helped improve system-wide coherence, coordination and accountability. His delegation endorsed the Committee's recommendations, particularly regarding the need for greater coordination within the Secretariat to improve the formulation of expected accomplishments so that all mandated activities and outputs would be reflected in the budget effectively and efficiently.

29. Given the importance of evaluation for decision-making, programme design and delivery, and transparency, his delegation also agreed with the Committee's recommendation that programme managers should improve the qualitative aspects of indicators of achievement so that results could be better evaluated. Lastly, his delegation concurred that CEB must do more to enhance system-wide coordination. There was vast potential for all coordinating bodies to improve the effectiveness and coherence of programme delivery.

30. **Mr. Ovsyanko** (Belarus) expressed satisfaction with the recommendations made by CPC on the strategic framework for the period 2012-2013 and reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the mandate of CPC as the main subsidiary body of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination.

Agenda item 132: Pattern of conferences (A/65/32, A/65/122 and A/65/484 and Corr.1)

31. **Ms. Corti** (Chair of the Committee on Conferences), introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2010 (A/65/32), said that, with respect to the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2011, the Committee had considered proposals for the rescheduling of meetings of the Fifth Committee during the resumed session, but had expressed disappointment that possible options had not included changing the meeting dates of CPC or the opening of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

32. With regard to the utilization of conference services and facilities, addressed in chapter III, section A, of the report, the overall utilization rate for all four duty stations had increased to 86 per cent in 2009 from 85 per cent in 2008. Meeting cancellations had remained high in New York compared to the other duty stations. In its draft resolution, the Committee urged intergovernmental bodies to review their meeting entitlements and to plan and adjust their programmes of work based on the actual utilization of conference-servicing resources in order to improve their efficient use of conference services.

33. The utilization rates of four intergovernmental bodies had been below the benchmark of 80 per cent for three consecutive years. She had held consultations with the Chair and secretariat of one of those bodies; the Chair had agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the Bureau in order to improve the utilization of conference services. The Committee had communicated with the secretariats of two of the other intergovernmental bodies to notify them of the utilization rates and make suggestions for improvement. In 2010, the utilization rates of those bodies had surpassed the benchmark. A meeting with the Bureau of the fourth body had been impossible owing to its busy schedule; she had provided its Chair with relevant information by letter.

34. Turning to the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings, she noted that 79 per cent of such meetings had been provided with interpretation services in 2009, compared to 77 per cent in 2008. The draft resolution contained in annex I to the report requested the Secretary-General to continue to employ innovative means to address the difficulties experienced by Member States owing to the lack of conference services for some meetings and to report thereon to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences.

35. The Committee had been updated by the Secretariat on the impact of the implementation of the capital master plan on meetings held at Headquarters. There were limitations on accommodating meetings with large numbers of participants owing to reduced room capacity and on accommodating ad hoc meeting requests in excess of core activities owing to a reduced number of rooms. In the draft resolution, the Committee requested all meeting organizers to liaise closely with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management on the scheduling of meetings to allow maximum predictability in coordinating activities at Headquarters during the construction period.

36. The Committee had been informed that, owing to limited storage space in the North Lawn Building, it would take longer to deliver printed documents. The Department had proceeded with electronic processing and printing on demand as part of its move towards full electronic processing of documents. There was no intention to discontinue the provision of hard copies, however, given the unequal access by Member States to information technology tools. The Committee had requested the Secretary-General to consult Member States on initiatives that affected the utilization of conference services and facilities.

37. Chapter V of the report addressed the issue of integrated global management. The Committee members had attended a presentation on project 2, which included the Electronic Meetings Planning and Resource Allocation System, known as eMeets 2.0, and the interpreters assignment programme, or eAPG module. The Committee welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the utilization of conference services through the implementation of the project.

38. The Committee had sought information on whether the review of systems and processes across duty stations being conducted by the Department might result in a proposal for reform of the budget structure and whether it was preferable to dissolve section 2 of the budget or maintain the current structure. The Secretariat had informed the Committee that the dissolution of section 2 was not advocated, but its structure could be made more logical. The Committee requested the Secretary-General to report to the

General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session on the efficiency and accountability mechanisms of conference management across the four duty stations.

39. With respect to documentation and publication-related matters, the Committee had discussed at length the Secretary-General's proposal to change the method used to determine the length of documents from page count to word count and the draft resolution recommended by the Committee would have the General Assembly accept the change without prejudice to any of the six official languages. The Committee had received reassurances about the margins of flexibility that would be given to languages other than English on the basis of statistical trends.

40. As to translation- and interpretation-related matters, the Committee had been informed that all four duty stations had made efforts to increase the share of external translation without sacrificing quality. The draft resolution requested the Secretary-General to increase the proportion of translation done contractually where it yielded comparable quality to in-house translation and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session.

41. On the issue of the continued difficulty of attracting high-quality interpreters and translators to the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the high percentage of outsourced translation, which required more robust quality assurance, the Committee endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal to upgrade the level of six interpreter and six senior reviser posts from the P-4 to the P-5 level in the context of the proposed programme budget for 2012-2013.

42. The Committee had welcomed the measures taken to address the replacement of retiring staff in the language services, including the strengthening of cooperation with language training institutions. The theme of outreach had been discussed during a videoconference with representatives of offices away from Headquarters. The Committee had noted that memorandums of understanding had not been signed with language institutions in all geographical regions. Its recommendations were contained in section V of the draft resolution.

43. **Mr. Shaaban** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/65/122), said that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had successfully responded to an unprecedented demand for conference services during the first two weeks of the current session. Although the Department stood ready to provide services for meetings mandated by the Assembly, it nonetheless required specific information from Member States regarding the duration and modalities of meetings and documentation requirements in order to be able to carry out its duties efficiently and cost-effectively. Such information would enable the Department to produce the necessary statements of conference-servicing or programme budget implications.

44. The General Assembly might wish to note that meetings in respect of which programme budget implications could not be assessed at the time of adoption of the legislative mandates, owing to lack of information, were identified in the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2011 (A/AC.172/2010/L.2). The Secretariat would report to the Assembly in accordance with rule 153 of its rules of procedure when the modalities of those meetings had been agreed.

45. With regard to utilization of conference resources, more meetings had been cancelled at New York than at the other duty stations. In some cases, cancellations had disrupted the planning of interpretation services and resulted in a waste of resources, an observation that had been emphasized by the Board of Auditors in its management letter on the Department's Central Planning and Coordination Service. The General Assembly might wish to urge intergovernmental bodies to review their meeting entitlements and to plan and adjust their programmes of work based on the actual utilization of conference-servicing resources in order to improve their efficient use of conference services.

46. The Department continued to seek the most cost-efficient means of service delivery. At its annual coordination meeting in June 2010, it had adopted a "proximity rule" for servicing of meetings held away from the four duty stations. According to that policy, the costs of utilizing staff from different duty stations would be compared and the least costly arrangement would be assembled.

47. The Department continued to face difficulties in accommodating meetings with a large number of participants and ad hoc requests for meeting services because of reduced capacity in the North Lawn

Building. A recent power failure had disrupted meetings; backup systems were being tested in order to avoid such a disruption in the future. Construction activity and closure of access routes at the Headquarters complex had created a serious logistical challenge with regard to the delivery of documents to the various conference rooms. The Department was exploring different proposals to overcome that challenge.

48. Proactive document management had yielded good results and would be implemented at all duty stations. The 2010 coordination meeting had decided that the slotting system would be used at all four duty stations. In the reporting period, a large percentage of the parliamentary documents produced in New York had been issued in a timely manner. The four duty stations would jointly plan work in 2011 in order to improve the timely issuance of parliamentary documents to Member States.

49. In response to the request by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in its report on the audit of conference services put at the disposal of the Human Rights Council in 2009 (A/64/511), annex VIII of the Secretary-General's report set out the guidelines on the word and page limits of documents. After much deliberation, the Committee on Conferences had decided to support the Secretary-General's proposal to shift the measurement of document length from page count to word count.

50. In July 2010, the Publishing Section had installed advanced digital equipment in its print shop. The new machines were fully automatic and could produce bound documents and books of up to 350 pages. The machines had minimal environmental impact, greatly sped up document production and offered the possibility of print-on-demand services.

51. With regard to contractual translation, the Department had clearly understood that Member States wished to see an increase in the proportion of the translation workload that was processed by external translators. The use of contractual translation at all four duty stations had enabled the Department to manage an increased workload without a corresponding increase in resources.

52. The Department's succession planning efforts had been focused on outreach to universities and, in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management, streamlining the competitive examinations for the language services. With the anticipated signature in 2011 of additional memorandums of understanding, the Department would have established partnerships with universities that offered language training in all six of the official languages.

53. Despite its inadequate financial and staffing resources for external training, the Department was making every effort to promote and maintain language-related services. In addition to allocating temporary resources to fund a dedicated P-4 level post and a General Service post for training and outreach coordination, the Department used its language staff to carry out outreach activities. Such an arrangement was not sustainable, however, the Department required permanent and dedicated resources if its future outreach efforts were to produce the desired results. He therefore urged Member States to allocate the necessary resources in the biennium 2012-2013.

54. In 2009, the Department's global survey of conference services had been harmonized across the duty stations, and common indicators had been established. Known as the e-Survey, it had been extensively promoted and had been open to delegations of Member States at all four duty stations from 2 to 15 November 2009. Despite the extensive promotional efforts, the number of responses to the survey, as well as attendance at the Department's informational meetings for delegations, had been disappointingly low. He therefore appealed to Member States to respond more enthusiastically in future to such surveys and meetings.

55. Recalling that OIOS, in its evaluation of the Department's integrated global management initiative, had expressed reservations about the quality of the data that had been provided, he said that the Department had worked hard to improve and standardize data collection methodology and the quality of data collected. Intensive efforts at the four duty stations had produced substantive findings and recommendations covering the principal conference management areas. Some of those recommendations had budget implications and would have to be validated by the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. When adopted, the recommendations would allow further development of the data warehouse, known as project 1, which was designed to support better informed managerial decisions and enhance

transparency and accountability throughout the Department.

56. With regard to project 2, which had been renamed gMeets, he said that the interpreters assignment programme, or eAPG module, had been launched in New York in 2010, making it fully operational at all four duty stations. The other component of gMeets, known as eMeets 2.0, was the new module for planning, scheduling and requesting meetings. Having successfully been launched in Vienna and New York, the module was expected to be in use in Geneva and Nairobi by the end of 2010.

57. Acting in response to General Assembly resolution 64/230, in which the Secretary-General had been requested to ensure the full implementation of the OIOS recommendations on integrated global management, the Department had completed an exhaustive evaluation of the document planning and processing systems at all duty stations. The Department was awaiting the recommendations of its Information Technology Governance Board to determine what actions to take and estimate the resources it would need for that purpose.

58. Although the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management was accountable for all expenditure under section 2 of the budget, he was not endowed with sufficient authority to manage and disburse resources, both financial and human. The current situation of "accountability without authority" was not a viable management concept for such a large Department. The Secretariat was therefore modifying the relevant Secretary-General's bulletins with a view to establishing clear reporting lines.

59. **Mr. Kelapile** (Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the pattern of conferences (A/65/484 and Corr.1), said that, with regard to the impact of the capital master plan on the Department's operations, the Advisory Committee re-emphasized the need to take all necessary measures to ensure the full and uninterrupted provision of quality services while work proceeded.

60. With regard to the integrated global management initiative, the Advisory Committee had been informed that, while financial gains had not been the primary objective, some efficiencies had been realized, including savings on airfares and the discontinuation of the use of non-local freelance précis-writers. Notwithstanding the progress that had been made, the Secretary-General indicated that the pace of implementation had remained slow because, to date, integrated global management had been premised on a voluntary and collaborative approach. The Secretary-General proposed, as a remedial measure, that the organizational structure and hierarchical reporting lines within the Department should be revised in order to afford the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management the authority required to fulfil General Assembly mandates. The Advisory Committee concurred with the approach that had been proposed by the Secretary-General.

61. The Advisory Committee welcomed the introduction of slotting systems at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, as well as the Department's intention to establish a global dynamic slotting system, which the Advisory Committee trusted would lead to improved capacity planning. It also welcomed the steps taken to deal with additional workload arising from the activities of the Human Rights Council.

62. With reference to the particular concerns that had been expressed by the General Assembly regarding the timely availability of documentation for the Fifth Committee, the Advisory Committee wished to point out that its own compliance with submission guidelines was contingent on both the programme of work of the Fifth Committee and the timely receipt of reports and other documentation originating elsewhere in the Secretariat.

63. In respect of document length, the Advisory Committee had no objection to the General Assembly confirming the shift to measuring the length of documents by word count rather than page count, without prejudice to any of the six official languages of the United Nations. As for the proposal to limit the length of intergovernmental reports to a maximum of 10,700 words, the Advisory Committee emphasized that limits and guidelines on the length of intergovernmental reports must be applied in a reasonable manner in order to ensure optimal quality and content.

64. In order to ease the demographic transition currently affecting the language services, the Department had proposed raising or waiving the mandatory age of separation for language staff. The Advisory Committee was of the view that that proposal

involved human resources policy issues and, as such, should not be addressed in the present context. As a temporary measure, however, the General Assembly might wish to request the Secretary-General to explore the possibility of increasing the number of days that retired language staff were permitted to work beyond the current 125-day ceiling.

65. Lastly, the Advisory Committee emphasized that any savings and/or efficiencies derived from the increased use of contractual translation must not come at the expense of quality and stressed that contractors whose work systematically failed to meet the required standards should be removed from the common roster. The Advisory Committee also recommended that, in his proposed budget for section 2 for the biennium 2012-2013, the Secretary-General should provide a more complete explanation of the Department's finding that quality control should be performed by senior revisers at the P-5 level.

66. **Mr. Al-Shahari** (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group wished to commend the Committee on Conferences on the quality of its report and endorsed the recommendations contained therein. The draft resolution submitted in the report would provide a good basis for the negotiations on the item.

67. The Secretary-General's report indicated that the overall utilization of conference services had remained above the established benchmark of 80 per cent. However, the utilization factor in Nairobi had decreased from 100 per cent in 2008 to 90 per cent in 2009 as a result of the use of more standardized statistical reporting. The Group hoped that the Secretary-General would continue to enhance efforts to ensure standardized reporting across all four duty stations with a view to presenting credible and comparable data to the General Assembly. The Group believed that the utilization rate of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) could be improved, despite the anticipated competition from other facilities in Addis Ababa or the region.

68. While the Group recognized the work that had been done thus far by the interdepartmental task force on documentation for the Fifth Committee, it remained committed to considering additional measures to ensure compliance with submission deadlines by author departments, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 64/230. Author departments should also comply with the formatting guidelines set out in various General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolution 63/248, section IV, paragraphs 7 and 8.

69. The Group was encouraged by the increase in the proportion of documents that had been submitted on time and commended the Department for ensuring that all documents that had been submitted on time and complied with the limits on length had been processed within four weeks. Although the Group would carefully study the recommendation on shifting the measurement of document length from number of pages to word count, it remained convinced that the General Assembly had already provided adequate guidelines on the length of documents. The Group reiterated that quality of presentation and document content should not be compromised by undue emphasis on document length.

70. The successful implementation of a succession management plan in the language services was of vital importance to achieving the highest standards of quality in translation and interpretation. The Group would closely examine the Secretary-General's proposal for a proactive succession planning programme, including outreach to universities and streamlining of the competitive examination for language services. Although the Group welcomed the outreach programme, it wished to emphasize that the programme should reach out to educational institutions all over the world. The Group would also carefully study the proposal to raise or waive the mandatory age of separation of language staff. However, it acknowledged that the issue could only be addressed within the context of discussions on human resources management.

71. Noting with concern that the consolidated lists of individuals and entities subject to Security Council sanctions had not been translated into all the official languages, the Group would seek further clarification regarding that important matter in informal consultations. The Group was also concerned that, on several occasions, interpreters had made inappropriate comments, which had been heard through the interpretation system, regarding delegates' statements. It therefore called on the Secretariat to take all measures necessary to avoid the repetition of such unfortunate actions.

72. Although the Group agreed that using contractual translation would result in cost savings, quality should

not be sacrificed. The Secretariat must therefore ensure that qualified staff were in place to monitor and control the quality of documents processed externally. The Group was concerned that the United Nations Office at Nairobi lacked revisers and interpreters at the P-5 level to perform that important task. The Group would follow the matter closely when the Secretary-General submitted the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

73. The accelerated implementation of the capital master plan must not adversely affect the quality and availability of conference services or the equal treatment and working conditions of the language services. The Department must ensure uninterrupted service while the plan was being implemented.

74. The Group reiterated the importance of adhering to the guidelines and procedures contained in the administrative instructions concerning the use of United Nations premises for meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits by Member States and the Secretariat, and emphasized that such meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits must be consistent with the purposes and principles of the Organization.

75. The purpose of the integrated global management initiative had been to integrate information technology into the management of conference services and documentation processing with a view to facilitating a balanced division of labour between Headquarters and the other main duty stations. In harmonizing the methods of work, the Department must respect the unique characteristics of each duty station and language group, and observe the principle of equal grade for equal work. Implementation of integrated global management must also comply with relevant General Assembly resolutions.

76. In its resolution 61/236, the General Assembly had recognized the importance of the meetings of regional groupings; it had also recognized that the provision of interpretation was necessary for the smooth functioning of those meetings. Although the percentage of meetings of regional and other major groupings that had been provided with interpretation services at the four main duty stations had been 79 per cent in 2009 as compared to 77 per cent in 2008, there had been a marked increase in the number of meetings for which interpretation services had not been requested. The Group therefore wished to know whether meeting organizers had not requested interpretation services because they genuinely did not require them or because they had wished to avoid having their request denied.

77. **Mr. De Preter** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said the European Union was concerned that progress in the implementation of integrated global management, while significant, had remained slow. It was therefore necessary to review the current structure of conference management at the four duty stations with a view to achieving full implementation of integrated global management.

78. The European Union welcomed the Secretariat's efforts to avoid the late submission of documents, including Fifth Committee documents, and requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in that regard.

79. Adequate conference facilities and the highest standards of language services in all six official languages were essential to the work of United Nations intergovernmental and expert bodies. The European Union therefore welcomed the steps taken by the Secretary-General to address the issue more effectively. It also acknowledged the progress made with regard to reform across the duty stations and noted the comments and recommendations of the Committee on Conferences in that regard.

80. The Secretary-General must ensure that the implementation of the capital master plan did not impair the high quality of language and conference services which Member States justifiably expected. In that connection, the European Union noted that a series of technical difficulties had disrupted language services since the opening of the General Assembly's sixty-fifth session.

81. **Mr. Coffi** (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that, although the Secretary-General's report explained that the decreased utilization rate of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi was attributable to the use of more standardized statistical reporting, the Group nonetheless wished to reiterate that the Nairobi Office

should be accorded the same treatment as the other duty stations in order to avoid such discrepancies.

82. The Group was also concerned that the utilization rate of the conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had remained unchanged at 76 per cent in 2008 and 2009. More proactive and innovative marketing was required in order to respond to competition from other local and regional conference facilities. The Secretary-General should consider improving the facilities at the ECA conference centre, including historic Africa Hall, which was in dire need of repair.

83. The large number of language staff retiring in the near future was a matter of concern in view of the high vacancy rates in the language services, particularly at the Nairobi Office. That problem was compounded by the lengthy recruitment process for language staff. It was therefore imperative to implement the succession planning programme, which focused on outreach to universities and streamlining of the competitive examination for language services.

84. While the Group welcomed the outreach programme, it was disappointed that the programme had not been made available to educational institutions all over the world at the time of its launch. Moreover, not a single African university was among the institutions that had signed memorandums of understanding with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. The Group trusted that the Department would take appropriate action to remedy the situation.

85. The Group welcomed the launch of the Department's "Africa project", which was aimed at building up conference-servicing capacity within African countries. The project would enable the Organization to address the high vacancy rate for language staff, particularly in Africa. In that connection, the Group welcomed the partnerships that had been established with a number of African universities, including the University of Nairobi and the Pedagogical University of Mozambique, and looked forward to the launch of the programme with Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

86. The Group also commended the Secretary-General for having significantly reduced the high vacancy rate at the Nairobi Office. However, it remained concerned that Nairobi was the only duty station without senior interpreters or revisers at the P-5 level to monitor and control the quality of documentation processed externally. The lack of such senior staff was particularly unfortunate because approximately 40 per cent of all translation at Nairobi was processed by contractual translators. The Group therefore strongly supported the Secretary-General's proposal to remedy the situation in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

87. With regard to provision of interpretation services to the meetings of regional groupings, the Group noted that the Vienna and Nairobi Offices lacked the capacity to offer that service to such meetings.

88. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) said the Organization's conference facilities and services should be used to support communication among the Member States. His delegation therefore reiterated its objection to the use of United Nations facilities by certain States, with the cooperation of the Secretariat, to engage in activities hostile to other Member States. General Assembly resolutions 63/248 and 64/230 notwithstanding, such incidents continued to occur and the Secretariat had taken no action to prevent them.

89. His delegation would seek information on the status of documentation pertaining to the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, the translation of which had been delayed at the time of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. It intended to follow closely the steps taken by the Secretariat aimed at avoiding such a situation in the future.

90. His delegation noted with concern that the Secretariat had once again proposed modifying the guidelines for intergovernmental reports and reports based on submissions by Member States. It was not for the Secretariat to interpret or amend Member States' positions. Its role was to implement intergovernmental agreements and faithfully report on discussions among Member States. Such proposals raised the possibility that some United Nations officials wished to manipulate those reports, creating problems for the Secretariat and making discussions among Member States more difficult. As on previous occasions, his delegation rejected the Secretariat's proposals.

91. His delegation would closely follow the Committee's deliberations on issues of particular significance for the work of the Organization, including the use of conference services, the support

given to regional organizations, in particular the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, and the impact of the capital master plan on conference services.

92. **Mr. Workie** (Ethiopia) said his delegation commended the Secretary-General's marketing activities aimed at increasing the utilization rate of the conference centre at ECA. His delegation also congratulated ECA management for establishing partnerships with Ethiopian stakeholders aimed at promoting Addis Ababa as a conference and tourism destination. As a result, the utilization rate of the conference centre had reached 76 per cent in 2008 and 2009, as compared with 70 per cent in 2007 and 60 per cent in 2006.

93. While the improved utilization rate was welcome, more work was required to reach the 80 per cent utilization benchmark. In that connection, he said that lack of maintenance had made the conference centre less competitive. Africa Hall, which occupied a unique place in African history, was in need of renovation. The construction boom in Addis Ababa, including the development of state-of-the-art conference facilities, made it more important than ever to pursue aggressive and innovative marketing strategies. His delegation was of the view that the United Nations had yet to exhaust all options to increase the utilization rate of the conference centre, as called for in General Assembly resolution 64/230.

94. His delegation called on the Department, in collaboration with ECA management, to continue to explore all means of increasing the utilization of the conference centre and maintaining its competitiveness.

95. **Ms. Ojiambo** (Kenya) said that her delegation continued to be concerned by the high vacancy rate in the language services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. Although the vacancy rate had decreased to a tolerable level, sustained efforts were required in order to build on those gains. In that connection, her delegation noted with appreciation that the Nairobi Office had launched a programme to provide practical training for young translators and interpreters who had yet to pass the United Nations exam.

96. Her delegation welcomed the Department's Africa project, which was aimed at enhancing the professional training programmes for translators and interpreters in Africa. She commended African universities for their commitment to work together in order to establish master's programmes in translation and interpretation. Developing partnerships with universities would provide a long-term solution to the issue of the high vacancy rates in the United Nations language services, including, in particular, at the Nairobi Office. The Department should, as a matter of priority, sign memorandums of understanding with the universities participating in the Africa project.

97. She welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to provide the Nairobi Office with qualified staff to monitor and control the quality of documentation processed externally. However, it was regrettable that, although the Organization had determined that P-5 was the appropriate level for quality control, Nairobi remained the only duty station which lacked posts at that level, despite the fact that approximately 40 per cent of the translation workload at that station was processed externally. Her delegation would follow the matter closely when the Secretary-General submitted the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

98. Her delegation noted with pleasure that, thanks to innovative marketing efforts, the utilization rate of the conference centre at Addis Ababa had increased to 76 per cent. However, that rate was still below the 80 per cent benchmark. Marketing efforts should therefore continue in order to attain the desired rate and respond to competition from local and regional conference facilities.

99. **Mr. Soomro** (Pakistan) said that curtailing any waste of conference resources was crucial, as each hour of fully serviced conference time cost the Organization thousands of dollars. Meetings of regional groups were important to the work of the United Nations and should be given priority in the assignment of conference and language services to the extent possible. Better planning of servicing and room allocation to regional groups during the high-level segment of the General Assembly was required. At the same time, regional groups should show restraint in their requests for meeting services.

100. The slow pace of implementation of integrated global management was disappointing; the process should yield tangible results in the form of more coherent delivery, financial savings and overall improvement in the Organization's conference management systems.

101. Noting that it was the prerogative of Member States and intergovernmental bodies to determine the

length and timing of inputs for documentation, he said that it was regrettable that the target of 90 per cent compliance with document submission deadlines was still not being met. His delegation expected that such efforts as proactive planning and document slotting would yield results and would not be mere exercises in deflecting criticism or diverting the attention of Member States away from the issues. A more rigorous and multipronged approach should be adopted to remedy delays in the submission of documents for consideration by the Fifth Committee; the Assembly's request for accountability mechanisms for late submitters should be pursued. His delegation wished to know why conclusions, summaries and recommendations in documents were not consistently printed in bold, as prescribed by the Assembly.

102. Delegations had faced confusion and difficulty during the high-level segment of the sixty-fifth session because they had not been informed in time of the need for colour-coded passes to attend side events. He wished to have assurances from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, as the lead department for conference arrangements, that such problems would not recur in future.

103. Lastly, he inquired about the status of the information and communications technology help desk for delegations.

104. **Ms. Perlanga** (Mexico) said that greater coordination was required among the heads of conference services at the different duty stations to ensure the success of integrated global management.

105. To deal with the demographic transition in the language services, outreach to universities was crucial, as was informing the public about language careers and the required qualifications for translators and interpreters. While good progress had been made in signing memorandums of understanding with universities, the Department should modify its outreach strategy to better inform Member States of how they could cooperate to ensure the training and recruitment of more language staff. It would be useful and cost-effective to diversify the locations at which examinations were administered.

106. Raising the retirement age for language staff would be a stopgap measure that would not solve the problem facing the Department. The issue should be discussed in the framework of human resources management and in the light of the reports of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and the International Civil Service Commission. Her delegation would look closely at the consequences of allowing retirees to work beyond the current ceiling of 125 days. In that connection, she requested a comparison of the costs of outsourcing translations and raising the ceiling for retirees.

107. With respect to the word limit for reports, a formula was needed that would take into account the differences between languages.

108. **Mr. Shaaban** (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management), responding to the questions raised by delegations, said that the decrease in the utilization rate at the United Nations Office at Nairobi was partly the result of the introduction of standardized reporting and partly the result of last-minute meeting cancellations. At Headquarters, the Group of 77 had 130 members and therefore required the use of a large conference room for its meetings. The cancellation of meetings by intergovernmental bodies at the eleventh hour prevented the reallocation of meeting rooms to regional groups. He requested the Group to make intergovernmental bodies aware of the issue.

109. The Department had no dedicated resources for the implementation of integrated global management. It did its best to finance the related projects — the $2.5 million cost of project 2, for example — through savings in other areas.

110. The timely issuance of documents depended on adherence to the 10-week rule. Documents that were submitted on time were processed within four weeks.

111. Regarding outreach to universities, he had sent a letter to permanent missions in 2008 requesting them to contact their respective national universities; only nine replies had been received. The Department had no dedicated resources for outreach, but tried to accommodate those universities that contacted it. One obstacle was that United Nations interpreters and translators were required to know two official languages apart from their mother tongue, a requirement that was not always met by students in language programmes.

112. On the issue of inappropriate comments by interpreters, he was aware of only one such incident. Interpreters were obligated not to comment on anything they heard while performing their duties. He requested delegations to inform the Interpretation Service of any incident immediately so that the Service

could take action. The informational meetings organized by the Department each year provided an opportunity for dialogue on any concerns that Member States might have concerning conference-servicing issues.

113. Owing to space constraints, the information and communications technology help desk had been relocated to the meeting services centre on the second floor of the North Lawn Building.

114. With respect to the issue of passes for side events during the high-level segment of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, while it was true that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had coordinated with the Department of Safety and Security during the event, the latter Department had the final word on all matters relating to security and passes.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.